

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

Secret Agent Men

Standard:

II. Time, Continuity, and Change
III. People, Places, and Environments
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
IX. Global Connections

Grade Level: 9-12

Objectives:

The student will:

- Analyze the earliest diplomatic efforts of the revolutionary colonies
- Evaluate how the earliest U.S. diplomats fulfilled their jobs
- Examine documents as primary sources of information

Time: 1-2 class period(s)

Materials: Document: **1776** *Report of Bonvouloir to the Count of Guines*
1776 *Recruiting Lafayette*
1776 *First Dispatch of Silas Deane from France*

Exercises: *Secret Agent Men Chart*

Resources: World Map Blank
Briefing Memo: Diplomacy in the Age of Revolution

Procedures:

Setting the Stage

The American colonies are in rebellion against Great Britain. Although they have not yet become an organized state, the colonies still have to conduct domestic and foreign affairs. How could they do this effectively?

Part of that urgent business was deciding how to approach other nations. This was an especially delicate matter since the struggle for independence was just a part of a more complex European struggle. Other European states, such as France, could not openly receive American representatives without angering the British, who saw the colonial question as a domestic matter.

Questions arose for the colonists. Should they seek an ally or allies in their fight against the British? Which nation(s) should be approached? How should these delicate negotiations be conducted? How could diplomacy be done safely and secretly during wartime? Who should represent the colonies as "official" diplomats? What tactics should be used by the agents?

Procedures:

1. Present the information and questions in **Setting the Stage** to students.
2. Distribute copies of documents, *Report of Bonvouloir to the Count of Guines*, *Silas Deane's First Dispatch from France*, and *Recruiting Lafayette*.
3. Reading the reports of the "secret agents," it is obvious that these communications represent fledgling attempts at diplomacy. Have students address these questions:
 - a. How was each of the men chosen to "represent their countries?"
 - b. What characteristics and credentials qualify each of these men as diplomats-secret agents?
 - c. Why is Deane's role especially significant in U.S. History?
 - d. Why do the French want these negotiations done in secrecy?
 - e. Identify other countries listed in the documents. In what context are they described?
 - f. What happens to Bonvouloir and Deane, neither of whom remained active in the diplomacy between France and the colonies (and eventually the independent United States)? (*See Additional Readings for more information.*)
 - g. Explain the interaction between Silas Deane and the Marquis de Lafayette as depicted in Deane's dispatch, *Recruiting Lafayette*. Why was Deane willing to give Lafayette the distinction of Major General? Was this acceptable within his orders from the Committee of Secret Correspondence? How does Lafayette contribute to the revolution?
4. What are current images of "secret agents" and their actions? How are the tactics of Bonvouloir and Deane similar and different?
5. Complete the chart, *Secret Agent Men*. Compare and contrast the modern spy trade with the actions of these men in 1776. Have students discuss their findings. Include in discussion how technology has changed the "life of a spy."
6. Additional Readings:
 - a. The Unlikely Spy [Bonvouloir]
www.ushistory.org/carpentershall/history/french.htm
 - b. Spies [Includes descriptions of invisible ink, codes, and other methods used by spies]
www.pbs.org/benfranklin/13_world_spies.html
 - c. Organization of Intelligence [The Committee of Secret Correspondence, The Secret Committee, The Committee on Spies]
www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/intelligence/orgintell.html
 - d. Silas Deane: The Mysterious Life and Death of An American Revolutionary
<http://www.silasdeaneonline.org/#silas>
 - e. Briefing Memo: *Diplomacy in the Age of the Revolution*

Extension Activities:

1. Consider that the colonies had to deal with spies within as well as from other countries. Investigate the role played by Tories or Loyalists during the revolution.

- www.pbs.org/benfranklin/13_world_spies.html
- www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/intelligence/orgintell.html

2. Analyze the *Report of Bonvouloir*. He has several misconceptions of the status of the revolution in the colonies. Identify these "bloopers."

3. The following geographic locations are mentioned by Silas Deane in his First Dispatch. Locate these sites on a map of North America and Europe. Have students identify the role played by each of these European countries in the intrigue of world politics and their effects on the Americans.

- France
- Spain
- The united colonies
- Great Britain
- Poland
- Prussia
- Germany
- Portugal ■